

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5725

S E C R E T AMMAN 6395

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652 XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR MASS JO US

SUBJECT: HAWK MISSILES

REF: STATE 225084

1. I SAW RIFAI MORNING SEPTEMBER 21 AGAIN ON REFTEL. HE POINTED OUT TO ME THAT STORY IN LOCAL PRESS WHICH HE FELT NECESSARY TO PRINT (AMMAN 6382) HAD VERY CAREFULLY AVOIDED SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER AND ITS CONDITIONS. IT FOCUSED ON CONTRACT ONLY WHICH JORDANIANS KNOW HAS ALWAYS BEEN CAST IN TERMS OF STANDARD CONDITIONS AND TRIED TO STRIKE A FAVORABLE NOTE BY ALSO COVERING FACT THAT SELF-DEFENSE AND NON-TRANSFER WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE CONTRACT.

2. RIFAI AGAIN REPEATED HIS COMMITMENT TO ME TO SAY NOTHING FURTHER OFFICIALLY ON THIS SUBJECT. I TOLD HIM THE STORY MIGHT GENERATE PRESS INQUIRIES. WHILE I COULD NOT BE SURE HOW WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE TO PLAY THIS, MY RECOMMENDATION TO YOU WOULD BE TO SAY "WE ARE NOT COMMENTING ON SPECULATIVE STORIES IN THE US OR FOREIGN PRESS ON THIS SUBJECT". FURTHER IF PRESSED ON OUR POSITION WE WOULD ONLY REPEAT STATEMENT "WE ARE PROCEEDING AS PLANNED". RIFAI THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE FINE HERE IF WE COULD HOLD IT TO THAT POINT.

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3. RIFAI WAS A BIT GLOOMY ABOUT THE PRESENT BALANCE SHEET ON THIS ISSUE. HE WENT OVER IN SOME DETAIL WITH ME A VOA STORY BY A VOA CORRESPONDENT IN WASHINGTON ONE MOHAMAD GHANEN WHICH SAYS THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HAD CONFIRMED THAT JORDAN HAD SEEN THE FULL LETTER BEFORE IT HAD BEEN SENT TO THE CONGRESS. I TOLD RIFAI THAT OUR SPOKESMAN HAD NOT SAID SUCH A THING AND EMPHASIZED TO HIM THE FACT THAT VOA REPORTED THE NEWS AS IT CAME OUT. HE SAID ONE HUNDRED MILLION ARABS WILL NEVER BELIEVE THAT VOA CAN BE DIVORCED FROM THE US GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO CITED THE STORY AS CONTAINING ADMISSIONS OF A SECRET AGREEMENT BETWEEN US AND JORDAN ON THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER.

4. WE DID NOT DWELL OVERLY LONG ON ABOVE BUT I ATTEMPTED TO PUT THE PROCESS OF COMING TO AGREEMENT ON THE HAWKS IN PERSPECTIVE FOR RIFAI. IF ALL WENT AS WE HOPED THEY WOULD GET THEIR 14 BATTERIES AND THIS WAS A VICTORY IN TWO OR THREE WEEKS THE LETERS AND TACTICS OF THE MOMENT WOULD BE FORGOTTEN AND IT WOULD BE CLEAR THAT JORDAN HAD WON THE CONGRESS TO ITS POINT OF VIEW ON THIS ISSUE. IN MY JUDGEMENT NO OTHER ARAB STATE COULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS UNDER THE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING AT THIS TIME. KING AND RIFAI SHOULD TAKE SOME MEASURE OF SATISFACTION IN FACT THAT THEY HAD COME THROUGH WITH SO MUCH OF WHAT THEY REALLY NEEDED AND DESIRED INTACT. I WAS CONFIDENT WHEN THIS WHOLE EPISODE WAS LOOKED AT IN PERSPECTIVE THAT IT WOULD BE SEEN BY JORDAN AND ITS PEOPLE IN THAT LIGHT.

5. I EMPHASIZED IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY HOWEVER TO BEGIN CONGRATULATING OURSELVES. I WAS KEEPING MY FINGERS CROSSED UNTIL THE DEADLINE HAD PASSED AND UNTIL WE HAD WORKED OUT THE CONTRACT.

6. I CALLED RIFAI'S ATTENTION DURING THE CONVERSATION TO BOB KEATLEY'S STORY IN WALL STREET JOURNAL WHICH STATED VERY CLEARLY THAT JORDANIANS HAVE A MASSIVE CONSTITUENCY PROBLEM OF THIER OWN AND THAT SEPTEMBER 18 STATEMENT WAS BEING READ AND EXPLAINED IN WASHINGTON

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IN THAT LIGHT. KEATLEY'S STORY ALSO POINTED OUT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONTRACT CONDITIONS AND PRESIDENT'S LETTER. RIFAI SAID HE HAD READ SUMMARY OF THAT STORY IN WIRELESS FILE. HE DID NOT TELL ME IT CAUSED HIM ANY PROBLEMS AND INDICATED TO ME THIER STATEMENT TODAY FIT EXACTLY INTO THAT CONTEXT.

7. RIFAI OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS HAS TOLD ME THAT

KING WOULD LIKE TO HAVE LETTER OF OFFER HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO WORK ON. HE IS PREPARED TO BEGIN THE PROCESS EARLY NEXT WEEK. SINCE DOCUMENTS NORMALLY COME THROUGH REGULAR AIR POUCH AND TAKE UP TO THREE WEEKS, WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST USE OF SPECIAL DOD COURIER IN THIS CASE TO MEET KING'S EXPRESSED DESIRES. WE WILL HAVE FUTHER COMMENT ON THE QUESTION OF DELIVERY SCHEDULES AND SOME PRELIMINARY SUGGESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE TO OFFER BY SEPTTEL.

8. ACTION REQUESTED. DOD TO FORWARD LETTER OF OFFER TO AMMAN BY SPECIAL COURIER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER CONGRESSIONAL DEADLINE IS PASSED.
PICKERING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NO HARD COPY, CAT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975AMMAN06395
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P860032-1665, N750004-0539
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750931/aaaabasz.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 75 STATE 225084
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <08 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HAWK MISSILES
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, OGEN, JO, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006